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In Honor of the 240th Marine Corps Birthday: I am Navy Medicine – HM2 James Louck

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On the U.S. Marine Corps' birthday, Nov. 10, 1775, we also recognize those of Navy Medicine's Hospital Corps who have fought and served side-by-side with their 'Devil Dogs.' Wherever there are Marines, a Hospital Corpsman is there with them.



From the hardscrabble, back-of-beyond Combat Outpost Shir Ghazay in Helmand Province, Afghanistan to the key logistical hub Manas Airbase, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, wherever his Marines went, so did Navy Medicine's Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (Fleet Marine Force/Surface Warfare) James Louck.

"Outside the wire there was always a lot of running and a lot of yelling. I always did a little of both it seemed. It was an area that was bad for most of the time I was there."

"I did get meritoriously promoted and also achieved my Fleet Marine Force pin there." "It was a fantastic hands-on learning experience. There are aspects of being deployed in such a war time setting that I'll never forget and will have with me the rest of my days."

We also spent about a month up in Kyrgyzstan at the rallying point for a lot of troops heading into and out of Afghanistan and even got put on alert at that location due to potential local unrest.

As a Riverside, Calif. native and graduate of Temecula Valley High School, 2004 and current leading petty officer (LPO) of Naval Hospital Bremerton's Multiservice Ward, my military career began one fateful, faithful fall afternoon at a recruiting station in Hemet, Calif.

What made me interested in Navy Medicine is that my grandfather and brother were both Navy. I wanted to serve with the Marine Corps. I figured I'd get the best of both worlds and become a corpsman.

My personal story is one of luck. I am very fortunate to have served on a broad platform of assignments and have just so happened to always be at the right place at the right time. Navy Medicine has taken me around the globe to Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Japan, Alaska, Guam, Philippines, China, Okinawa and South Korea.



I've held the positions of clinic hospital corpsman, line corpsman, and Medical department LPO on USS John S. McCain (DDG 56). Becoming Fleet Marine Force was my goal ever since meeting my instructors at HM "A" school, I knew then that's what I wanted to be. The FMF **is an earned qualification** and Sailors have to be attached to forward-deployable Marine units to be eligible.

I was assigned to 2nd Battalion 4th Marines, 1st Marine Division Camp Pendleton, and deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Helmand Province, Afghanistan from August 2011 to March 2012.

The best part of my Navy career, hands down, is helping others in need. Your Marines believe you can do the impossible and your position – as their Fleet Marine Force qualified doc – gives you the opportunity to prove them right.

The most difficult part of being on deployment as a FMF is hands-down the "veggie omelet" MRE (meals ready to eat), but the most gratifying is being accepted by your Marines.

Being a FMF corpsman helps our Navy Medicine mission priorities of readiness, value and Jointness by giving you the tools to adapt to any situation and the ability to think clearly in a stressful situation.

If I could sum up my experience in one sentence as Fleet Marine Force qualified corpsman, it would be that when you are hurt, tired and on the other side of the world you're never alone.

Happy Birthday to all my Marines!



Editor' Note – During the World War One battle of Belleau Wood, France, the Germans began to refer to the U.S. Marines Corps they encountered there as 'Teufel Hunden,' or 'Devil Dogs.' With accurate rifle fire, fixed bayonets and hand-to-hand combat, the moniker was hard-earned with 5,183 killed in action and wounded during the 20-day struggle, for a casualty rate of approximately 51 percent.

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